



## Exercise 3.7

# Guiding Neighborhood Policy



Natural resource professionals in the interface may be able to influence resource management in private residential developments by providing developers with guidance as they craft neighborhood covenants. Many new developments have neighborhood covenants that create rules restricting land-use activities. By approaching developers and providing them with information on how they can maximize natural resource benefits while reducing risks, resource professionals can help foster neighborhood-level policies that protect natural resources for years to come. Although neighborhood covenants can be difficult to change once they are in place, resource professionals can help provide guidance if residents attempt to change their covenants.

Another way resource professionals can influence resource management in private subdivisions is by informing resident groups about natural resource issues. Neighborhood groups and associations exist within many interface subdivisions. Ideally, the resource professional becomes a trustworthy source of information and assistance that the residents look to for guidance.

**Objectives:** Participants will be able to do the following:

1. Approach a developer of a new interface subdivision and provide assistance in developing resource-wise neighborhood covenants.
2. Provide neighborhood groups and associations with information about local natural resource issues and management strategies.

**Materials:**

*Presentation 3.5*  
Flip chart  
Markers

**Time:** 30 minutes

1. Present the corresponding slides for this exercise from **Presentation 3.5**. Read the following scenarios aloud to your participants. You can outline important information on a flip chart or overhead if you like. The purpose of this exercise is to identify how a resource professional could work with new and existing neighborhood covenants to conserve interface resources.
2. Ask them to divide into small discussion groups and to come up with a general plan for approaching each scenario.
3. Give participants 15 minutes for discussion and ask them to answer the questions listed below. When they are ready, lead a discussion with all the participants using these questions.

- What opportunities for influencing neighborhood-level policy and management did you observe? How would you approach the developer or residents in each scenario? What kinds of things could you do to gain their trust?
- What types of information would you give residents? Why? How could you convince them of the importance of this information? How could you correct misconceptions they might have?
- How does the approach differ in Scenario 1 versus Scenario 2? Why?
- How could you continue to communicate and work with the homeowners association in Scenario 2?

### Scenario 1

Paradise Forest is a large, new residential development in the wildland-urban interface. One-fourth of it is currently finished and lots are still selling. Upon completion it will contain 286 houses. A small river runs through the development. Deer, bear, and other wildlife are abundant and are beginning to get into garbage cans, eat landscape plants, and contribute to human-wildlife conflicts. Paradise Forest is surrounded by an overgrown, fire-prone pine forest, and with the exception of large, generously fertilized front lawns, trees and shrubs surround the perimeter of most of the houses. You know that the developer has just begun creating the neighborhood covenants.

### Scenario 2

Paradise Forest is a five-year-old subdivision in the wildland-urban interface. It contains 286 houses. A small river runs through the development. Deer, bear, and other wildlife are abundant and regularly get into garbage cans, eat landscape plants, and contribute to human-wildlife conflicts. Paradise Forest is surrounded by a thick, fire-prone pine forest, and with the exception of large, generously fertilized front lawns, trees and shrubs surround the perimeter of most of the houses. The neighborhood covenants fail to provide guidance for addressing these challenges. Some residents are doing things to solve these problems but insist a neighborhood-wide effort is necessary.

## Summary

Neighborhood covenants, deed restrictions, and the norms established by developers and homeowners associations can greatly influence residents' use and management of natural resources in the interface. Resource professionals may have the opportunity to advise a developer about natural resource considerations during the creation of these neighborhood-level policies. Homeowners associations provide important opportunities for resource professionals to inform and advise groups of landowners about their influence on natural resources. By approaching and working with developers and neighborhood groups, your participants can influence decisions about entire subdivisions, such as how to maintain landscaping, design their driveways, care for their pets, dry their clothes, choose roofing material, maintain common areas, or manage insects or pathogens. It is important to take advantage of these opportunities as new residential development creates more wildland-urban interface.